

Sure, Your Algorithm Is Really Fast, But Is It Really Correct?

Jakob Nordström

University of Copenhagen and Lund University

AI Lund Lunch Seminar
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This Is Me...

Jakob Nordström

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... And Here Are Three Problems I Get Paid for Thinking About

$$(p \vee \bar{u}) \wedge (q \vee r) \wedge (\bar{r} \vee w) \wedge (u \vee x \vee y) \wedge \\ (x \vee \bar{y} \vee z) \wedge (\bar{x} \vee z) \wedge (\bar{y} \vee \bar{z}) \wedge (\bar{x} \vee \bar{z}) \wedge (\bar{p} \vee \bar{u})$$

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- Variables should be set to **true** or **false**
- Constraints like $(x \vee \bar{y} \vee z)$ means x or z should be true or y false
- \wedge means all constraints should hold simultaneously
- Is there a truth value assignment satisfying all constraints?

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$$(1 - p)u = 0$$

$$(1 - q)(1 - r) = 0$$

$$r(1 - w) = 0$$

$$(1 - u)(1 - x)(1 - y) = 0$$

$$(1 - x)y(1 - z) = 0$$

$$x(1 - z) = 0$$

$$yz = 0$$

$$xz = 0$$

$$pu = 0$$

For **true** = 1 and **false** = 0, is there a $\{0, 1\}$ -valued solution?

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$$1 - q - r + qr = 0$$

$$r - rw = 0$$

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$$u - pu = 0$$

$$p + (1 - u) \geq 1$$

$$1 - q - r + qr = 0$$

$$q + r \geq 1$$

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$$(1 - r) + w \geq 1$$

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$$u + x + y \geq 1$$

$$y - xy - yz + xyz = 0$$

$$x + (1 - y) + z \geq 1$$

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$$(1 - x) + z \geq 1$$

$$yz = 0$$

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Highly Concrete Applications of These Very Abstract Problems

- Software analysis, testing, and synthesis [DMB11]
- Hardware verification [Sha09]
- Air and train traffic control [ABFP12, FFH⁺16, ZR14]
- Smart crypto contracts [AGRS20, AGH⁺22]
- Gene regulatory network inference [PBD⁺22]
- Computational protein design [AAB⁺14, HD19]
- Assigning donated organs for transplants [MO12, BvdKM⁺21]
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- Proving theorems in pure mathematics [HK17]

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(Requires fleshing out quite a bit of details, but we don't have time for this in this brief talk. . .)

Bad News

- This type of problems discussed already in Gödel's famous letter in 1956 to von Neumann ("the father of computer science")
- Topic of intense research in computer science and artificial intelligence (AI) ever since early 1960s
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- Modern problems involve **humongous formulas** (100,000s or even 1,000,000s of variables)
- And machine learning approaches do not work

What's the Problem with Machine Learning?

Compare image recognition. . .

- Start with a picture of a cat
- Modify a few pixels
- Still picture of a cat
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- Automated reasoning is all about understanding such subtle differences
- **Neurosymbolic AI** is the idea of using automated reasoning to make ML more reliable

The Success of Combinatorial Solving (and the Dirty Little Secret)

- Revolution since the turn of the millennium in **automated reasoning** for so-called **combinatorial solvers** for, e.g.:
 - ▶ Boolean satisfiability (SAT) solving and optimization [BHvMW21]
 - ▶ Constraint programming [RvBW06]
 - ▶ Mixed integer linear programming [AW13, BR07]
 - ▶ Satisfiability modulo theories (SMT) solving [BHvMW21]
- Often solve these very hard problems extremely successfully in practice!
- **Except the solvers are sometimes wrong...** (even best commercial ones) [BLB10, CKSW13, AGJ⁺18, GSD19, BMN22, BBN⁺23, GCS23, Tin24]
- Even worse: No way of knowing for sure when errors happen

What Can Be Done About Solver Bugs?

- **Software testing**

Very useful, but bugs slip through even with careful domain-specific testing

Progress using [fuzzing](#) and [delta debugging](#) [BB09, BLB10, KB22, NPB22, PB23]

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Prove that solver implementation adheres to [formal specification](#)

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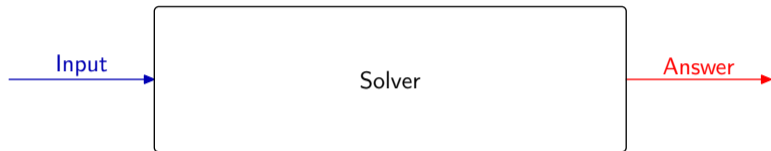
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- **Proof logging**

Make solver **certifying** [ABM⁺11, MMNS11] by adding code so that it outputs

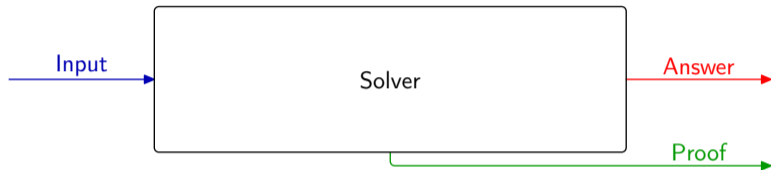
- 1 not only **answer** but also
- 2 simple, machine-verifiable **proof** that answer is correct

Proof Logging with Certifying Solvers: Workflow



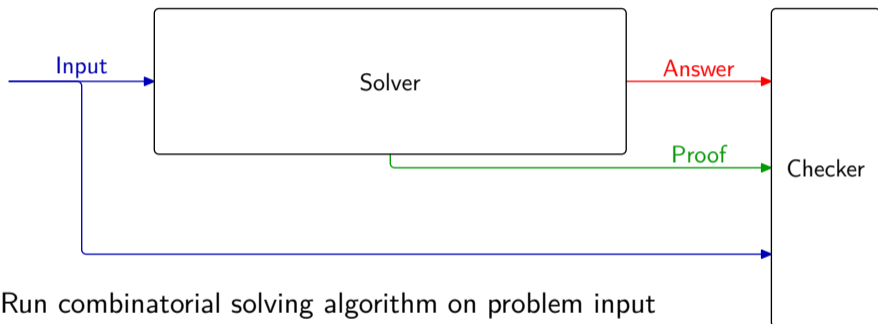
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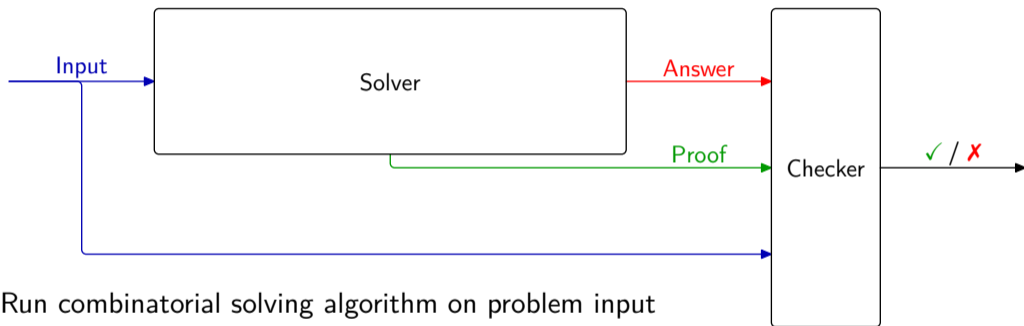
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- 3 Feed input + answer + proof to proof checker

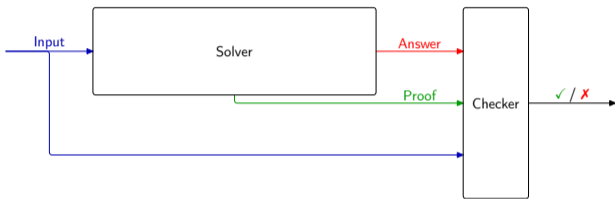
Proof Logging with Certifying Solvers: Workflow



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- 4 Verify that proof checker says answer is correct

Proof Logging Desiderata

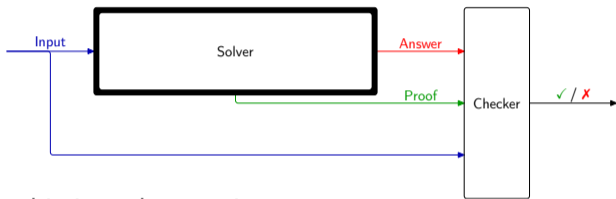
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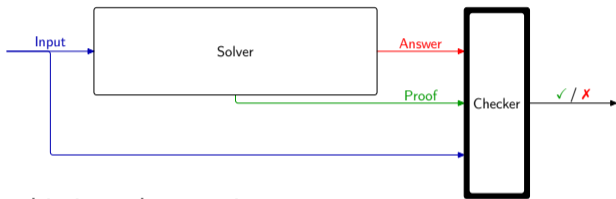
- **very powerful:** minimal overhead for sophisticated reasoning



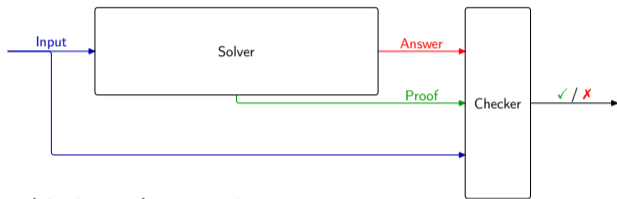
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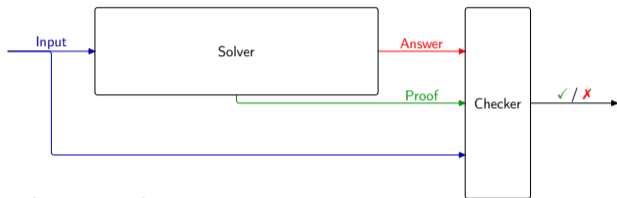


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Clear conflict expressivity vs. simplicity!

Asking for both perhaps a little bit too good to be true?

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Proof logging for sophisticated combinatorial solvers is possible!



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(These slides with references are online at <https://jakobnordstrom.se/presentations/>)

Design Principles for Proof Logging

Proof logging implementation

- Don't change solver
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Proof system

- Keep language simple — no XOR constraints, theory propagators, symmetries, ...
- But reason efficiently about such notions using power of proof system
- Combine proof logging with formally verified proof checker

The Sales Pitch For Proof Logging

- 1 Certifies **correctness** of computed results
- 2 Detects **errors** even if due to compiler bugs, hardware failures, or cosmic rays
- 3 Provides **debugging support** during software development
[GMM⁺20, KM21, BBN⁺23, EG23, Tin24, KLM⁺25]
- 4 Facilitates **performance analysis**
- 5 Helps identify potential for **further improvements**
- 6 Enables **auditability**
- 7 Serves as stepping stone towards **explainability**

The SAT Problem

- **Variable** x : takes value **true** (=1) or **false** (=0)
- **Literal** ℓ : variable x or its negation \bar{x}
- **Clause** $C = \ell_1 \vee \dots \vee \ell_k$: disjunction of literals
(Consider as sets, so no repetitions and order irrelevant)
- **Conjunctive normal form (CNF) formula** $F = C_1 \wedge \dots \wedge C_m$: conjunction of clauses

The SAT Problem

Given a CNF formula F , is it satisfiable?

For instance, what about:

$$(p \vee \bar{u}) \wedge (q \vee r) \wedge (\bar{r} \vee w) \wedge (u \vee x \vee y) \wedge \\ (x \vee \bar{y} \vee z) \wedge (\bar{x} \vee z) \wedge (\bar{y} \vee \bar{z}) \wedge (\bar{x} \vee \bar{z}) \wedge (\bar{p} \vee \bar{u})$$

Proofs for SAT

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For unsatisfiability: a proof is a sequence of clauses

- Each clause follows “obviously” from everything we know so far
- Final clause is empty, meaning contradiction (written \perp)
- Means original formula must be inconsistent

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Clause C **unit propagates** ℓ under partial assignment ρ if ρ falsifies all literals in C except ℓ

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- $p \vee \bar{u}$ propagates $u \mapsto 0$

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Proof checker should know how to unit propagate until saturation

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DPLL [DP60, DLL62]: Assign variables and propagate; backtrack when clause violated

“Proof trace”: when backtracking, write negation of decisions made

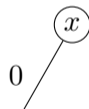
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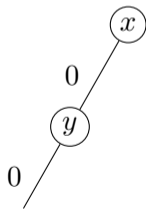


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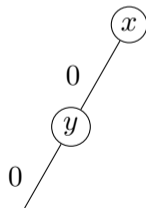


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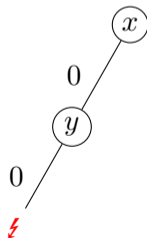
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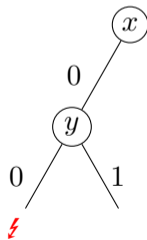
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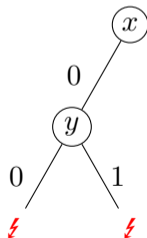
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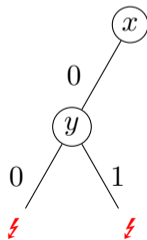
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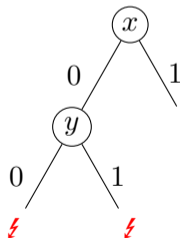
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1 $x \vee y$

2 $x \vee \bar{y}$

3 x



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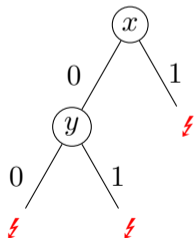
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① $x \vee y$

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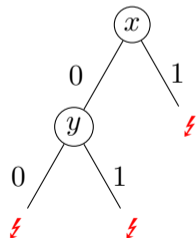
① $x \vee y$

② $x \vee \bar{y}$

③ x

④ \bar{x}

⑤ \perp



Reverse Unit Propagation (RUP)

- Backtrack clauses are valid constraints inferred by DPLL algorithm
- To make this into a proof, need backtrack clauses to be **easily verifiable**

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Fact

Backtrack clauses from DPLL solver generate a RUP proof

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Run CDCL SAT solver [BS97, MS99, MMZ⁺01] on our favourite CNF formula:

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Free choice to assign value to variable

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Forced choice to avoid falsifying clause

Given $p = 0$, clause $p \vee \bar{u}$ forces $u = 0$

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Continue until satisfying assignment or **conflict**

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$$y \stackrel{u \vee x \vee y}{=} 1$$

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$$\perp$$

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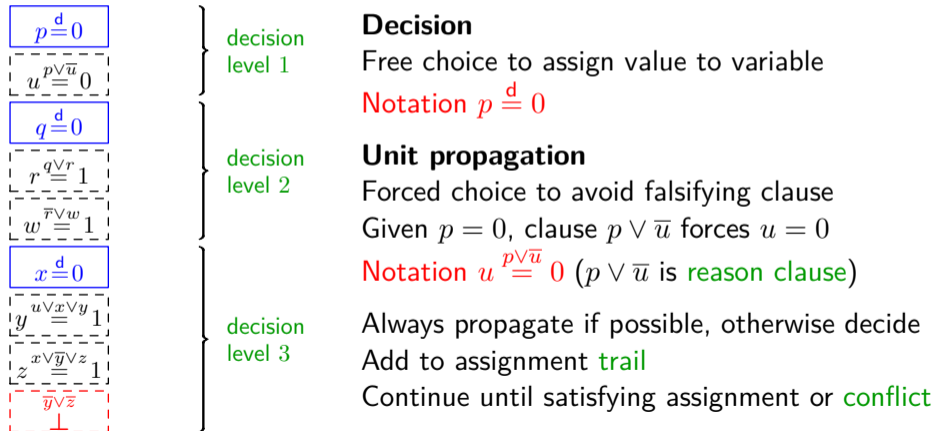
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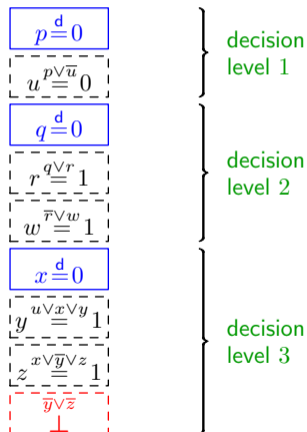
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Conflict Analysis

Time to analyse this conflict and learn from it!

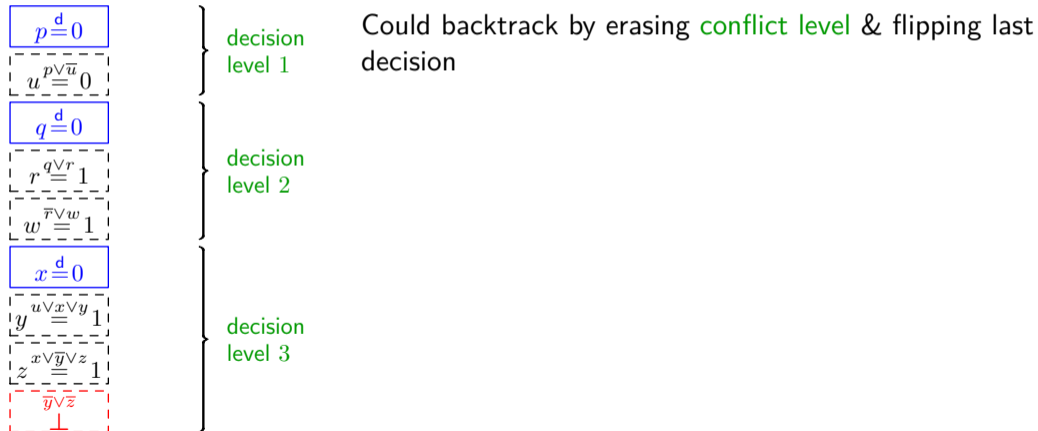
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$$y \stackrel{u \vee x \vee y}{=} 1$$

$$z \stackrel{x \vee \bar{y} \vee z}{=} 1$$

$$\bar{y} \vee \bar{z} \\ \perp$$

decision
level 1

Could backtrack by erasing **conflict level** & flipping last decision

decision
level 2

But want to **learn** from conflict and cut away as much of search space as possible

decision
level 3

Conflict Analysis

Time to analyse this conflict and learn from it!

$$(p \vee \bar{u}) \wedge (q \vee r) \wedge (\bar{r} \vee w) \wedge (u \vee x \vee y) \wedge (x \vee \bar{y} \vee z) \wedge (\bar{x} \vee z) \wedge (\bar{y} \vee \bar{z}) \wedge (\bar{x} \vee \bar{z}) \wedge (\bar{p} \vee \bar{u})$$

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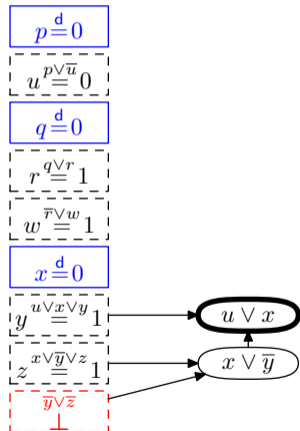
Case analysis over z for last two clauses:

- $x \vee \bar{y} \vee z$ wants $z = 1$
- $\bar{y} \vee \bar{z}$ wants $z = 0$
- Merge clauses & remove z — must satisfy $x \vee \bar{y}$

Conflict Analysis

Time to analyse this conflict and learn from it!

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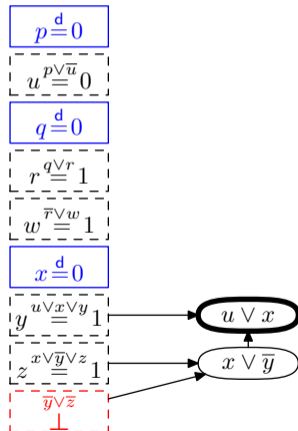
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Repeat until **UIP clause** with only 1 variable at conflict level after last decision — **learn** and **backjump**

Complete Example of CDCL Execution

Backjump: undo max #decisions while learned clause propagates

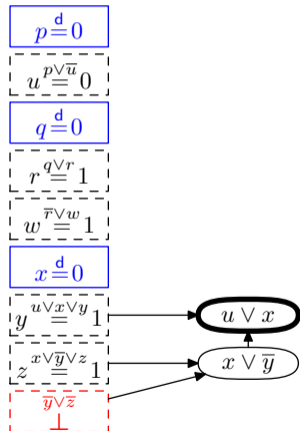
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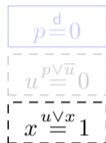
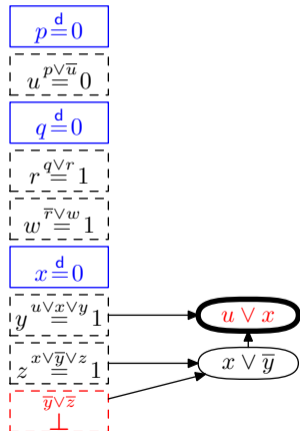


Assertion level 1 (2nd largest level in learned clause) — trim trail to that level

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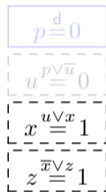
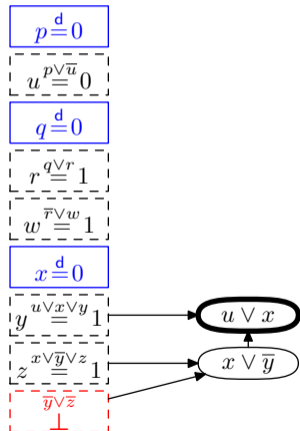
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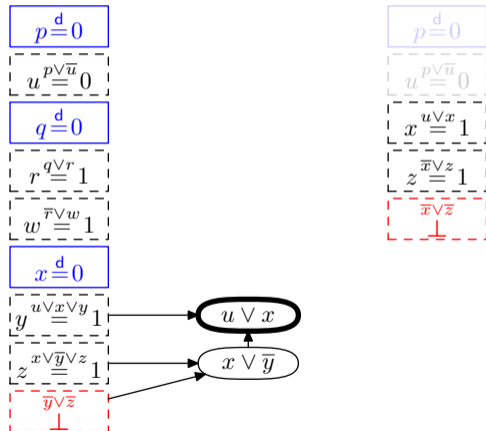
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Then continue as before...

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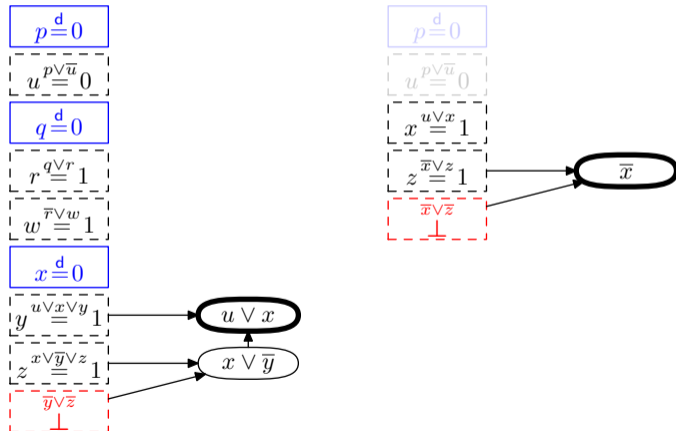
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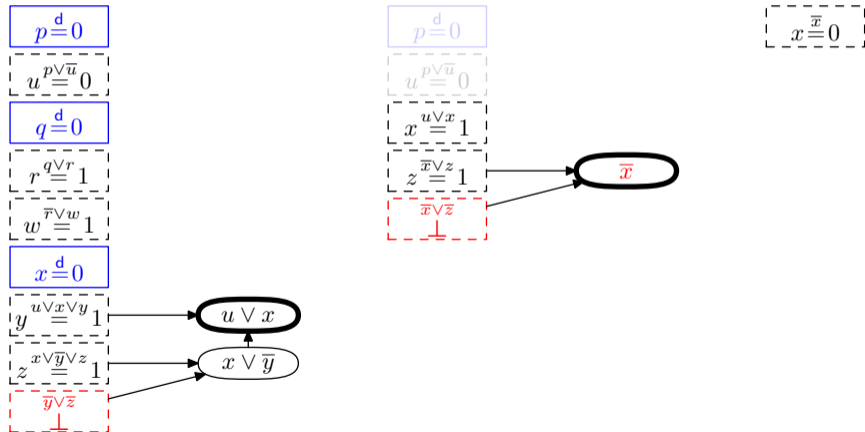
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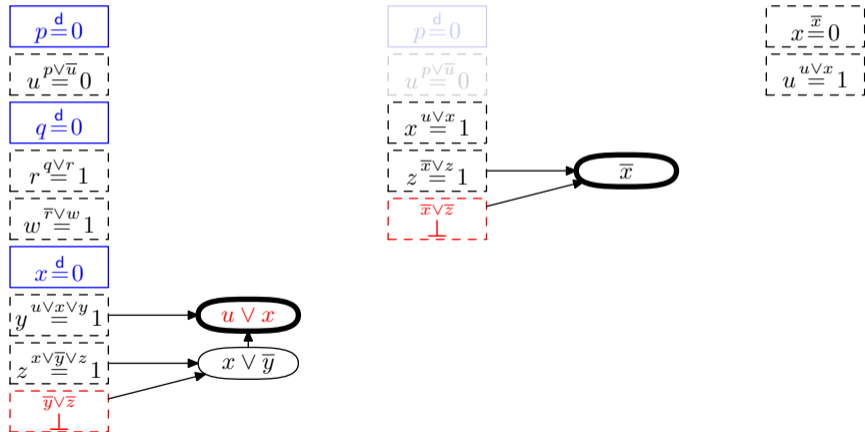
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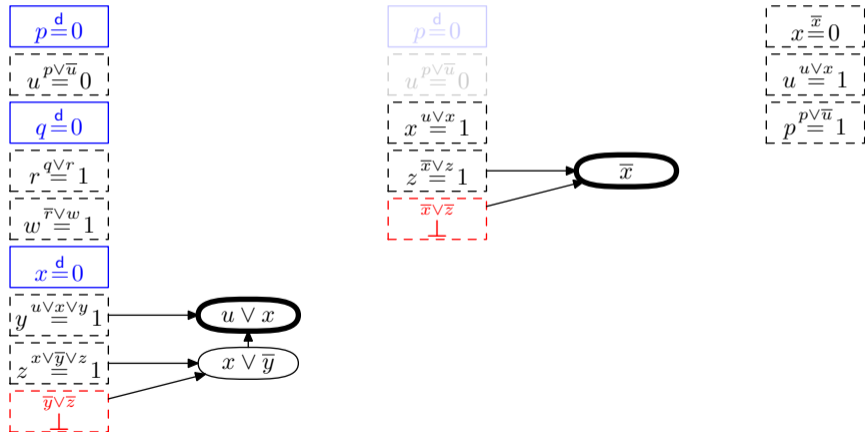
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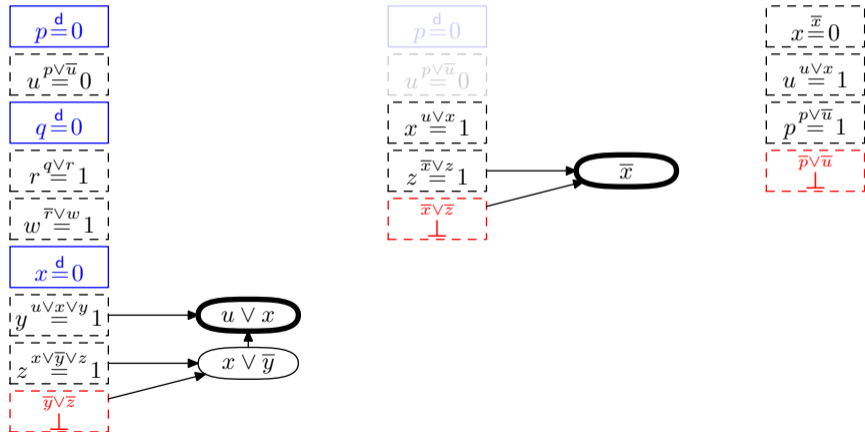
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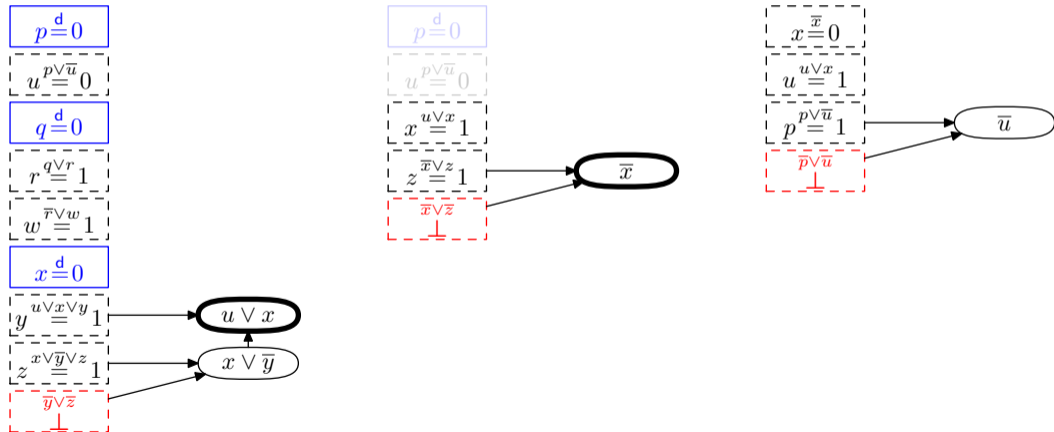
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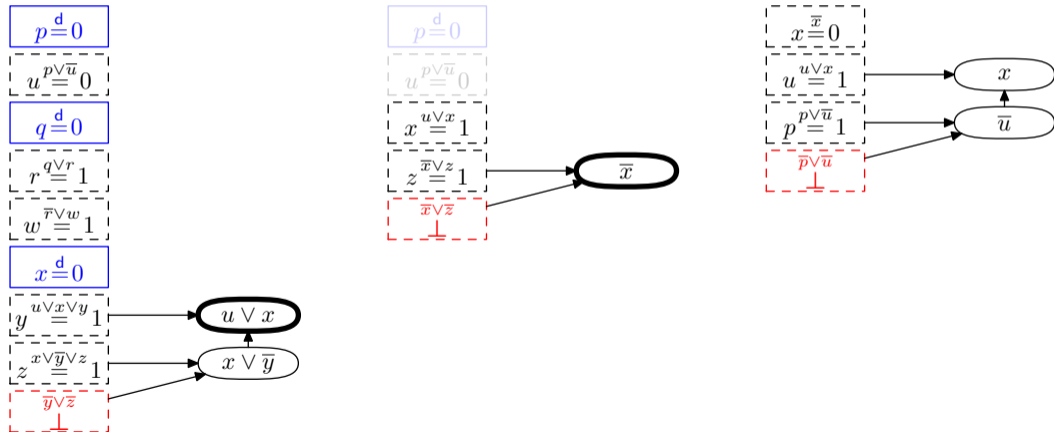
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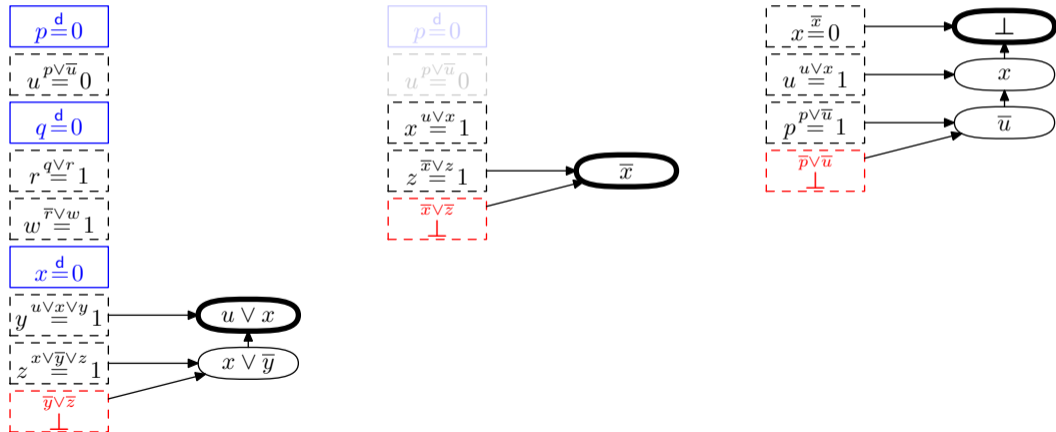
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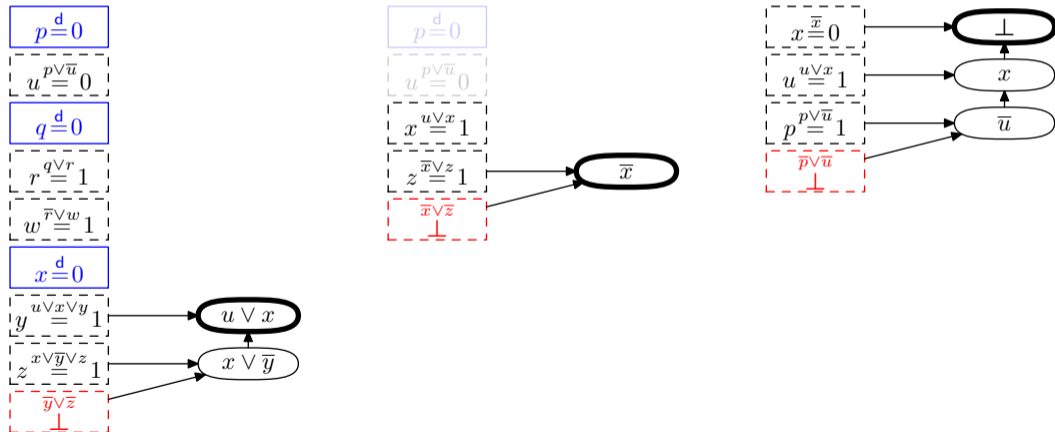
(*) Ignores pre- and inprocessing, but we don't have time to go into this level of detail

Resolution Proofs from CDCL Executions

Obtain resolution proof...

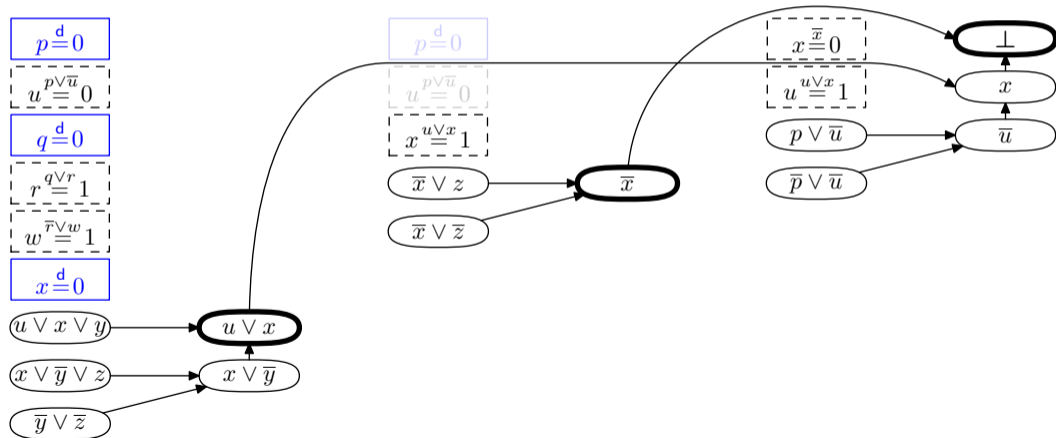
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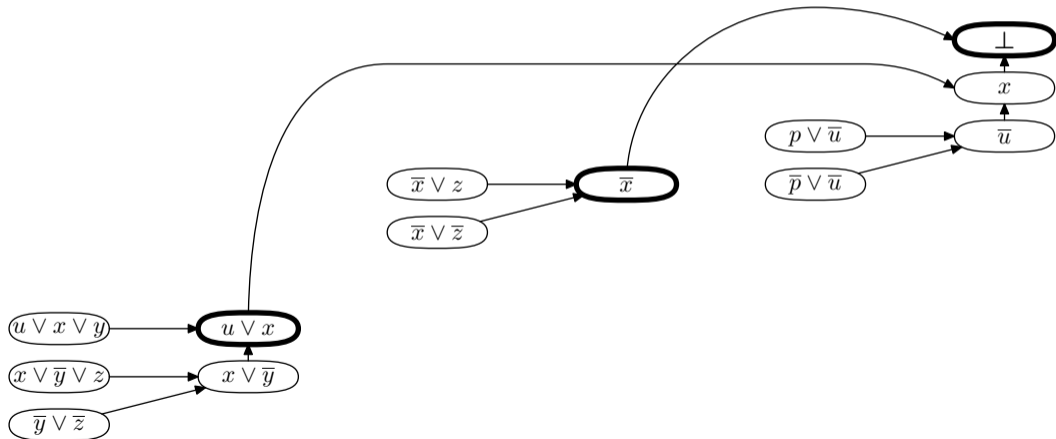
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More Ingredients in Proof Logging for SAT

Fact

RUP proofs can be viewed as shorthand for resolution proofs

See chapter [BN21] in *Handbook of Satisfiability* for more on this

But RUP and resolution are not enough for preprocessing, inprocessing, and some other kinds of advanced SAT solving techniques

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Suppose we want to introduce a new, fresh variable a encoding

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Fact

Extended resolution (RUP + definition of new variables) is essentially equivalent to the DRAT proof logging system [HHW13] most commonly used in proof logging for SAT solving

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Practical limitations of current SAT proof logging technology:

- Difficulties dealing with stronger reasoning efficiently (even for SAT solving)
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Use **pseudo-Boolean reasoning** with (extension of) the **cutting planes** proof system [CCT87]

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- 1 **Boolean satisfiability (SAT) solving** including advanced techniques such as Gaussian elimination [GN21] and symmetry breaking [BGMN23, ABB⁺26]
- 2 **SAT-based optimization (MaxSAT)** [VDB22, BBN⁺23, BBN⁺24, IOT⁺24]
- 3 **Pseudo-Boolean solving** [GMNO22, KLM⁺25]
- 4 **Subgraph solving** (max clique, subgraph isomorphism, max common connected subgraph) [GMN20, GMM⁺20, GMM⁺24]
- 5 **Dynamic programming and decision diagrams** [DMM⁺24]
- 6 **Presolving in 0–1 integer linear programming** [HOGN24]
- 7 **Constraint programming** [EGMN20, GMN22, MM23, MMN24, MM25]
- 8 **Automated planning** [DHN⁺25]

Future Challenges

User-friendliness

- Make proof logging easier for solver authors
- Make proof checking faster
- Improve support beyond $\{0, 1\}$ -valued problems for, e.g.,
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- Proofs of neural network robustness to limited input perturbations?
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Lots of other challenging problems and interesting ideas

- This talk will probably sound quite different in two-three years from now

VERIPB Resources

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We're happy to collaborate — please get in touch if you have computationally challenging problems where correctness is absolutely crucial!

VERIPB Resources

VERIPB tutorials, documentation, and more information can be found at <https://VeriPB.org>



Details on different proof logging techniques covered in research papers [EGMN20, GMN20, GMM⁺20, GN21, GMN22, GMNO22, VDB22, BBN⁺23, BGMN23, MM23, BBN⁺24, DMM⁺24, GMM⁺24, HOGN24, IOT⁺24, MMN24, DHN⁺25, KLM⁺25, MM25, ABB⁺26]

Lots of concrete example files at gitlab.com/MIA0research/software/VeriPB

We're happy to collaborate — please get in touch if you have computationally challenging problems where correctness is absolutely crucial!

And we're hiring — talk to me if you want to join the proof logging revolution! 😊

Summing up

- Automated reasoning and combinatorial solving are true success stories
- But ensuring correctness is a crucial, and not yet satisfactorily addressed, concern
- Certifying solvers producing machine-verifiable proofs of correctness is the most promising approach
- Cutting planes reasoning with pseudo-Boolean constraints seems to hit a sweet spot between simplicity and expressivity
- **Action point:** What problems can VERIPB solve for you? 😊



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Thank you for your attention!



Some Types of Pseudo-Boolean Constraints

1 Clauses

$$x_1 \vee \bar{x}_2 \vee x_3 \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad x_1 + \bar{x}_2 + x_3 \geq 1$$

2 Cardinality constraints

$$x_1 + x_2 + x_3 + x_4 \geq 2$$

3 General pseudo-Boolean constraints

$$x_1 + 2\bar{x}_2 + 3x_3 + 4\bar{x}_4 + 5x_5 \geq 7$$

Pseudo-Boolean Reasoning: Cutting Planes [CCT87]

Input/model axioms

From the input

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Literal axioms

$$\overline{l_i \geq 0}$$

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Literal axioms

$$\overline{l_i \geq 0}$$

Addition

$$\frac{\sum_i a_i l_i \geq A \quad \sum_i b_i l_i \geq B}{\sum_i (a_i + b_i) l_i \geq A + B}$$

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Multiplication for any $c \in \mathbb{N}^+$

$$\frac{\sum_i a_i l_i \geq A}{\sum_i c a_i l_i \geq cA}$$

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Multiplication for any $c \in \mathbb{N}^+$

$$\frac{\sum_i a_i l_i \geq A}{\sum_i c a_i l_i \geq cA}$$

Division for any $c \in \mathbb{N}^+$ (assumes normalized form)

$$\frac{\sum_i a_i l_i \geq A}{\sum_i \lceil \frac{a_i}{c} \rceil l_i \geq \lceil \frac{A}{c} \rceil}$$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

$$w + 2x + y \geq 2$$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

Multiply by 2 $\frac{w + 2x + y \geq 2}{2w + 4x + 2y \geq 4}$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

Multiply by 2 $\frac{w + 2x + y \geq 2}{2w + 4x + 2y \geq 4}$ $w + 2x + 4y + 2z \geq 5$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \quad w + 2x + y \geq 2 \\
 \hline
 2w + 4x + 2y \geq 4 \quad w + 2x + 4y + 2z \geq 5 \\
 \text{Add} \quad \hline
 3w + 6x + 6y + 2z \geq 9
 \end{array}$$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \quad w + 2x + y \geq 2 \\
 \hline
 2w + 4x + 2y \geq 4 \quad w + 2x + 4y + 2z \geq 5 \quad \bar{z} \geq 0 \\
 \text{Add} \quad \hline
 3w + 6x + 6y + 2z \geq 9
 \end{array}$$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \\
 \text{Add}
 \end{array}
 \frac{
 \begin{array}{r}
 w + 2x + y \geq 2 \\
 2w + 4x + 2y \geq 4
 \end{array}
 +
 \begin{array}{r}
 w + 2x + 4y + 2z \geq 5
 \end{array}
 }{
 3w + 6x + 6y + 2z \geq 9
 }
 \quad
 \frac{
 \bar{z} \geq 0
 }{
 2\bar{z} \geq 0
 }
 \quad
 \begin{array}{l}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \\
 \text{Add}
 \end{array}$$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \\
 \hline
 w + 2x + y \geq 2 \\
 \hline
 2w + 4x + 2y \geq 4
 \end{array}
 \quad
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 w + 2x + 4y + 2z \geq 5 \\
 \hline
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 \end{array}
 \quad
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 \bar{z} \geq 0 \\
 \hline
 2\bar{z} \geq 0
 \end{array}
 \quad
 \begin{array}{l}
 \text{Add} \\
 \hline
 \text{Add} \\
 \hline
 \hline
 \end{array}
 \quad
 \begin{array}{r}
 3w + 6x + 6y + 2z + 2\bar{z} \geq 9
 \end{array}
 \quad
 \begin{array}{l}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \\
 \hline
 \hline
 \hline
 \end{array}$$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \quad w + 2x + y \geq 2 \\
 \hline
 2w + 4x + 2y \geq 4 \quad w + 2x + 4y + 2z \geq 5 \quad \bar{z} \geq 0 \\
 \text{Add} \quad \hline
 3w + 6x + 6y + 2z \geq 9 \quad \hline
 2\bar{z} \geq 0 \quad \text{Multiply by 2} \\
 \text{Add} \quad \hline
 3w + 6x + 6y + 2 \geq 9
 \end{array}$$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \quad w + 2x + y \geq 2 \\
 \hline
 2w + 4x + 2y \geq 4 \quad w + 2x + 4y + 2z \geq 5 \quad \bar{z} \geq 0 \\
 \text{Add} \quad \hline
 3w + 6x + 6y + 2z \geq 9 \quad \hline
 2\bar{z} \geq 0 \\
 \text{Add} \quad \hline
 3w + 6x + 6y \quad \geq 7
 \end{array}
 \quad \text{Multiply by 2}$$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \quad w + 2x + y \geq 2 \\
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 \text{Add} \quad \hline
 3w + 6x + 6y + 2z \geq 9 \quad \hline
 2\bar{z} \geq 0 \quad \text{Multiply by 2} \\
 \text{Add} \quad \hline
 3w + 6x + 6y \quad \geq 7 \\
 \text{Divide by 3} \quad \hline
 w + 2x + 2y \geq 2\frac{1}{3}
 \end{array}$$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \quad w + 2x + y \geq 2 \\
 \hline
 2w + 4x + 2y \geq 4 \quad w + 2x + 4y + 2z \geq 5 \quad \bar{z} \geq 0 \\
 \text{Add} \quad \hline
 3w + 6x + 6y + 2z \geq 9 \quad \hline
 2\bar{z} \geq 0 \quad \text{Multiply by 2} \\
 \text{Add} \quad \hline
 3w + 6x + 6y \quad \geq 7 \\
 \text{Divide by 3} \quad \hline
 w + 2x + 2y \geq 3
 \end{array}$$

Cutting Planes Toy Example

$$\begin{array}{r}
 \text{Multiply by 2} \quad w + 2x + y \geq 2 \\
 \hline
 2w + 4x + 2y \geq 4 \quad w + 2x + 4y + 2z \geq 5 \quad \bar{z} \geq 0 \\
 \text{Add} \quad \hline
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 2\bar{z} \geq 0 \quad \text{Multiply by 2} \\
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 \text{Divide by 3} \quad \hline
 w + 2x + 2y \geq 3
 \end{array}$$

By referring to constraints by labels and to literal axioms by the literal involved as

$$\textcircled{C1} \doteq 2x + y + w \geq 2$$

$$\textcircled{C2} \doteq 2x + 4y + 2z + w \geq 5$$

$$\sim z \doteq \bar{z} \geq 0$$

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$$\sim z \doteq \bar{z} \geq 0$$

such a calculation is written in the proof log in reverse Polish notation as

pol $\textcircled{C1}$ 2 * $\textcircled{C2}$ + $\sim z$ 2 * + 3 d ;

Resolution and Cutting Planes

To simulate resolution step such as

$$\frac{\bar{y} \vee \bar{z} \quad x \vee \bar{y} \vee z}{x \vee \bar{y}}$$

we can perform the cutting planes steps

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Add} \\ \text{Divide by 2} \end{array} \frac{\bar{y} + \bar{z} \geq 1 \quad x + \bar{y} + z \geq 1}{\frac{x + 2\bar{y} \geq 1}{x + \bar{y} \geq 1}}$$

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$$\frac{x + 2\bar{y} \geq 1}{x + \bar{y} \geq 1}$$

Given that the premises are clauses 7 and 5 in our example CNF formula, using references

$$\text{@C7} \doteq \bar{y} + \bar{z} \geq 1$$

$$\text{@C5} \doteq x + \bar{y} + z \geq 1$$

we can write this in the proof log as

$$\text{pol} \quad \text{@C7} \quad \text{@C5} \quad + \quad 2 \quad \text{d}$$

Pseudo-Boolean Proof Logging — How and Why?

If problem is (special case of) 0-1 integer linear program

- just do proof logging [basically: add print statements to solver code]

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- do proof logging for 0-1 ILP formulation [but solver still works with original input]

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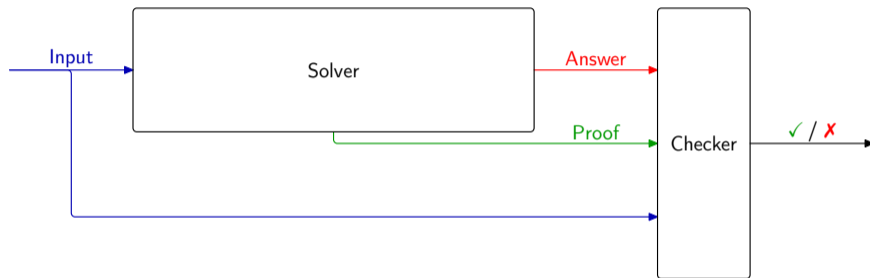
Otherwise

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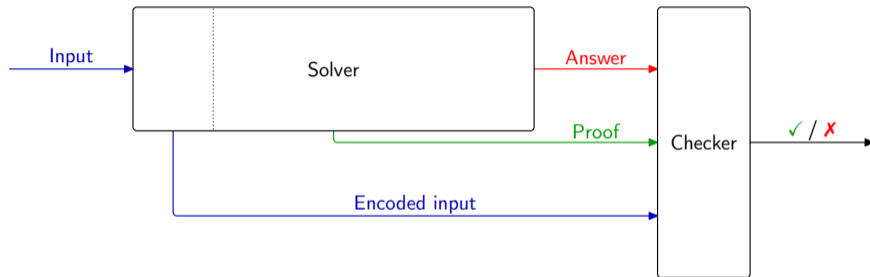
Goldilocks compromise between expressivity and simplicity:

- 1 0-1 ILP **expressive formalism** for combinatorial problems (including objective)
- 2 **Powerful reasoning** capturing many combinatorial arguments

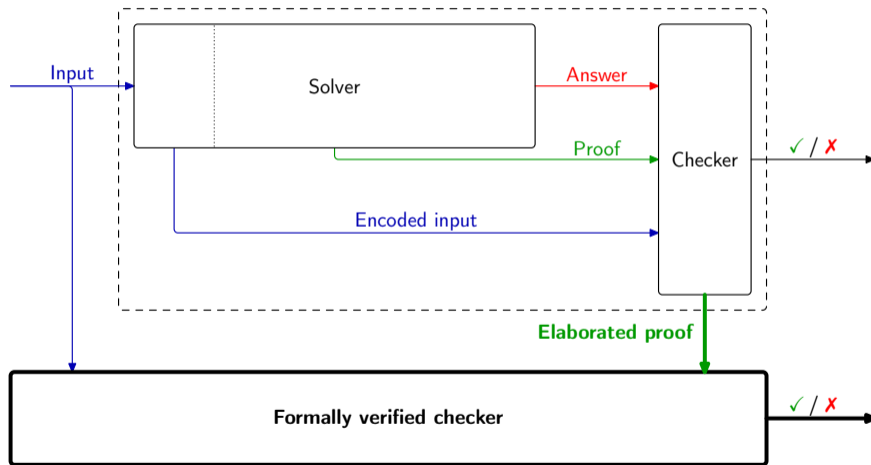
Proof Logging with Formally Verified Checking: Full Workflow



Proof Logging with Formally Verified Checking: Full Workflow



Proof Logging with Formally Verified Checking: Full Workflow



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